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## THE RELATION OF METAPHYSICS TO EPISTEMOLOGY.

HOW does the problem of the ultimate nature of Reality stand related to the problem of the possibility of knowledge? In attempting to deal with this question, it seems most convenient to refer directly to the opinions on the subject which have been advocated by Professor Andrew Seth in this REVIEW, especially in his articles in No. 2 and No. 5. In the first of these articles, Mr. Seth has argued for the separation of Psychology, Epistemology, and Metaphysics from one another. With what he says about psychology I am inclined on the whole to agree, though with some qualifications. The question of the separation of psychology from epistemology (I should prefer to say, in more general terms, 'from Logic') and from metaphysics is to a great extent a question of convenience of terminology. But it is also a question which depends upon the possibility of the existence of psychology as a particular science of nature. This possibility might, indeed, seem to be proved by the existence of psychologists, who adopt that view of their science. The question, however, may still be raised, how far these psychologists are consistent with themselves. If, however, psychology *can* be treated as a special science like the other sciences of nature, it can be kept free of metaphysics in the same sense, and in the same sense only, in which they can be kept free of metaphysics. We know that even the mathematician, still more the physicist or the biologist, is apt to trespass beyond the limits of his special science and to put forward the abstractions or the conventional concepts, of which in his special science he has rightly made use, as if they were absolute realities, truths about the universe as a whole, truths about the ultimate nature of things. It is obviously still harder for the psychologist, dealing as he does with a more complex material and with a material in which the *idola fori* and *idola theatri*

are more difficult to escape, to avoid such trespassing on metaphysics. And it may be argued that psychology, apart from metaphysics, or at least apart from epistemology, is too apt to mean an uncritical use of fundamental conceptions and a tacit and therefore mischievous assumption of some general philosophical theory; that psychology, apart from a critical theory of knowledge, is too often only a combination of haphazard observation and bad metaphysics, helped out by a little second-hand physiology. But a better ideal is possible, and is certainly present to the minds of many psychologists at the present day. A full recognition of the necessary abstractness of the psychologist's point of view and a careful elimination of metaphysical assertions, whether affirmative or negative, justify the claim to treat psychology as a natural science, or at least as what 'wishes to be' a natural science.

If, however, psychology be treated in this way, as a special science like physiology or chemistry, it can no longer put forward the claim to be *the* foundation of philosophy or even of any of the special philosophical sciences, such as logic, ethics, æsthetics. All the special sciences form part of the material for philosophy. That is one reason why philosophy is never complete, but has to have its problems worked out afresh by every generation, and, in a sense, by every individual who takes it seriously. All changes in scientific conceptions, just as all changes in religious ideas, in economical, social, and political conditions, bring new problems to light and compel us to face old problems in new ways. Psychology, from the nature of its subject-matter, has a closer connection with many philosophical problems than some of the other sciences. But philosophy cannot be based on psychology (as a science excluding epistemology and metaphysics) in any sense in which it is not also based on sociology and history, the sciences which deal with the human mind 'writ large.'

Admitting, then, a possible separation of psychology from epistemology and from metaphysics, we have to ask whether these can be separated from one another. Mr. Seth admits that metaphysics should be based on epistemology: at least he says

that "Epistemology clears the way for metaphysical construction or hypothesis."<sup>1</sup> But he treats epistemology as if it were a science clearly separable from metaphysics, so much so that he thinks it possible for us to be 'realists' in our epistemology, while we are 'idealists' in our metaphysics.<sup>2</sup> There is an intelligible sense in which it can be said that mere subjective idealism — the assertion that we never can know anything beyond the 'states of consciousness' which are the hypostatised abstractions with which the psychologist may profess to work — is inconsistent with idealism in the sense in which that means a belief in the ultimate rationality of the universe. But Mr. Seth sets up 'reals' in epistemology — the supposed absolutely existing 'things' of ordinary picture-thinking — in order to knock them down in metaphysics, by regarding them only as "moments in the being of an intelligently directed Life." It would seem easier, at least, and more obviously logical, to base such a metaphysical theory on an epistemology which denied the possibility of knowing anything that existed independently of all thought, and to base a denial of such a metaphysical theory on an epistemology which made the fact of knowledge require the existence of a plurality of absolutely existing 'reals.'

If metaphysics be strictly limited to speculative metaphysics, the attempt to frame an all-embracing hypothesis about the ultimate nature of the universe as a whole, we can, of course, distinguish that part of philosophy (whether possible or not) from an inquiry into the conditions of knowledge ; but we cannot safely separate such speculations from the preliminary inquiry. If our epistemology gives us no ground for any belief in any unity of the cosmos whatever or in any rationality in the process of it, the attempt to explain it as a whole is condemned at the outset. The attempt to construct a speculative metaphysics, however tentative and hypothetical, is only defensible if we feel some justification for believing that there is a cosmos to be explained, and that it must be to some extent intelligible by us. That is to say, in our epistemology, we are already, if we are

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophical Review*, Vol. I, p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> p. 142.

taking it seriously, on metaphysical ground. Knowledge professes to be knowledge of reality : and thus if we raise the question "How is knowledge possible?" or even the sceptical question "Is Knowledge possible at all?" we are *ipso facto* dealing with the question "What is reality—the only reality we ever can know or intelligently talk about?" We may, indeed, reserve the question "What is the *full* meaning of reality?" and we shall do well not to profess to give any but a provisional answer to it—such provisional answer constituting our speculative metaphysics, or 'philosophy' in the narrower and special sense.

The plain man certainly believes that, when he claims to know anything, he knows what is real ; but I do not think he really believes this real world that he knows to be something outside his consciousness, however ready he may be to assent to the dualistic realism of so-called common-sense philosophy, which our realists in epistemology and our realists who try to do without epistemology alike tend to rehabilitate. Mr. Seth urges that knowledge, "if it is not an illusion altogether, is a knowledge of realities which are trans-subjective or extra-conscious ; *i. e.*, which exist beyond and independently of the consciousness of the individual knowing them."<sup>1</sup> That all knowledge is "trans-subjective," in the sense of having an objective reference, is undoubtedly true. Even my knowledge of my own mental states is trans-subjective, in the sense that there is a distinction between the knowing subject and the object known, as there must be in all knowledge. Such knowledge may also be called objective in the further sense that even my own mental states, though known directly to myself alone, are events in the real universe and are capable of becoming mediately an object of knowledge to other persons than myself, if I speak truthfully about them. But I am unable to see how a knowledge of my own mental states—and such knowledge both the plain man and the psychologist profess to have—can be described as "a knowledge of realities which exist beyond the consciousness of the individual knowing

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 505.

them." Nor can I see how even my knowledge of the external world or of the mental states of other persons can be a knowledge of that which is 'beyond my consciousness' in any accurate sense of these words. The plain man certainly believes that he knows what is external to himself ; but such a belief is entirely misrepresented by the epistemological realist, who declares that the plain man believes that he knows what is external to or beyond his consciousness. When the plain man talks of what is external to himself, he means what is external to his *body* ; and that is exactly why he finds a theory of matter, such as that of Berkeley, so ridiculous. He 'refutes' Berkeley by kicking a stone, like Dr. Johnson, or by suggesting that an idealist should sit down on a gorse bush. If the plain man be made to think a little about the question, he will admit that the outside of his body, at least, is part of the external world ; but he probably continues to speak of his digestive apparatus as inside him. If the plain man thinks about his soul or his mind, he probably pictures it as a thing, occupying space, however tiny, inside his body—a box within a box : he may locate it in his bosom or in his head, according to the physiology of his period and to the degree in which physiological notions have penetrated into ordinary speech. It is only in virtue of this crude picture-thinking that the plain man is induced to say that he knows anything external to his mind or consciousness. No valid argument in behalf of the theory of epistemological realism can be drawn from what Mr. Seth calls the "primary, instinctive, and irresistible belief of all mankind, nay of the whole animal creation."<sup>1</sup> For the epistemological theories of other animals I cannot profess to speak confidently, but I feel certain that the 'crude' or 'naïve' or 'uncritical realism' of the plain man is nothing more than his belief that the real world is the world of his sensations and of the mental constructs by which he has (without being aware of the process, save very dimly) got into the habit of interpreting them to himself : that is to say, the real world of the plain man's belief consists in sensations *plus*

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 506.

images and ideas suggested by them, and is a real world against which idealism finds nothing to say. 'Crude realism' supplies no argument for the plausibility of epistemological realism except by taking advantage of the ambiguity in the word 'external.'

But how, one may well ask one's self, is it possible that a philosophical thinker like Professor Seth can have come to maintain such a proposition as that knowledge is of that which is external to consciousness? Sympathy with Reid is an inadequate explanation. My suggestion is that Professor Seth has not really escaped from a confusion between psychology and epistemology; or, to put it rather more accurately, his theory of knowledge depends upon a juxtaposition in the same sentence of the abstractions of the psychologist and the abstractions of ordinary language and of the special sciences. I must explain this in greater detail. "The world of consciousness on the one hand," we are told, "and the (so far hypothetical) world of real things on the other, are two mutually exclusive spheres. No member of the real sphere can intrude itself into the conscious sphere, nor can consciousness go out into the real sphere and, as it were, lay hold with hands upon a real object."<sup>1</sup> This passage suggests some of the same difficulties to which I have already referred. If the world of my consciousness excludes the real world, are my internal, my mental, experiences not real? Is it a delusion on my part that at this moment I am thinking of an article of Professor Seth's? On the other hand, the moment I have put down these words on paper, are the visible written words excluded from the world of my consciousness? Again, in which sphere is my body? I do not see how I can describe various bodily sensations of which I am very distinctly conscious as outside the world of my consciousness. If anything I know or think of is excluded from my consciousness because I know it, the sphere of my consciousness must be completely empty. If the sphere of my consciousness is not empty, I cannot see on what principle anything that I know is excluded from it.

<sup>1</sup> I, p. 515.

There is one sense only in which I can see an intelligible meaning in speaking of the world of my consciousness as a sphere that excludes the real world : and that is, if by the world of my consciousness be meant—certainly not what actually exists in my consciousness—but the abstraction with which the psychologist professes to deal, the stream of mental events *regarded apart from their content*. But if this is the meaning of the world of my consciousness in Mr. Seth's sentence, that part of the proposition belongs to psychology and not to epistemology. In epistemology the world of my consciousness ought surely to mean the world of my consciousness as that actually exists, *i. e.*, a series of images, ideas, etc., with their content, *i. e.*, with their objective reference. Even if we took the world of my consciousness to mean the abstraction dealt with by the psychologist, the difficulty would not be entirely removed ; for, as already said, the series of my mental states is supposed to be a series of events which form part of the real world, although only one aspect of the really existing fact is considered by the psychologist as such.

But the difficulty in Professor Seth's proposition does not end here. What does he mean by the "real world"—"so far hypothetical" even—which excludes the sphere of consciousness, and is excluded from it? There is certainly a real world which does not enter into *my* consciousness; but what is the real world which does not enter into any consciousness, if it be not that abstraction of real things, objects taken apart from their existence as objects for any subject, which ordinary language and the various special sciences find it convenient to assume? But epistemology as a philosophical science is surely bound to correct the convenient abstractions of the "abstract understanding" and to attempt to deal with the *whole* truth.

"At no point," says Professor Seth in another passage,<sup>1</sup> "can the real world, as it were, force an entrance into the closed sphere of the ideal ; nor does that sphere open at any point to receive into itself the smallest atom of the real world, *quâ real*, though it has room within itself *ideally* for the whole

<sup>1</sup> I, p, 516.

universe of God." The "as it were" and these metaphors of "spheres intruding themselves," etc., and such like, perhaps unavoidable, spatial figures leave one in some doubt how far the expressions are meant to be taken literally. I do not see how there can be any such thing as knowledge at all, unless the world of my consciousness is not a closed sphere, and unless the real world, *quâ real*, does intrude itself into that sphere. When I know anything, the sphere of my consciousness does lay hold with its hands (the metaphor is not mine) upon a real object: otherwise I do not know that thing, but am under an illusion that I do so. If the sphere of my consciousness insists on keeping its hands in its pockets and its mouth shut, it will inevitably find its inside empty. That we never *know* the real world, *quâ real*, is an odd formula for what calls itself *epistemological* realism. If "*quâ real*" means "*quâ thing-in-itself*," the statement is indeed an identical proposition: we cannot know what we cannot know. But if our knowledge is of *ideas* of things, and never of real things, the logical conclusion is the sceptical conclusion of Hume, and certainly not any doctrine that can claim kinship with the beliefs of the ordinary man. To sum up, the two closed spheres, in the only sense in which they have any meaning that I can understand, seem to me two opposite abstractions. On the one side there are the states of consciousness *minus* the content of these states; on the other, objects of possible knowledge (unless I am to say, of impossible knowledge — if 'things-in-themselves' be meant) *minus* the subject which makes them objects of possible knowledge. That these two abstractions exclude one another may readily be admitted (apart from the difficulty that in psychology the states of consciousness *minus* their content are just the objects of possible knowledge which the psychologist, as such, treats in abstraction from the conditions under which they are objects). But the statement seems to me irrelevant in epistemology — a science which prefers to deal with the conditions of knowledge.

Epistemology is nothing but a part of Logic. It is only because of the wretchedly limited sense in which the term

‘Logic’ has come to be used, that there is any excuse for a separate term for the philosophical investigation of the conditions of knowledge. If logic be supposed to deal with consistency only, the question of truth (*i. e.*, the question how knowledge is possible) — a question which Aristotle certainly dealt with in his *Analytics* — seems to require a separate science to deal with it. But this distinction between consistency and truth cannot be maintained as an absolute distinction. How, *e. g.*, can we use the argument *per impossibile*, which we do use even in the most abstract mathematics and in the most purely formal logic, unless we hold that the inconceivability of the opposite is the test of *truth*? To speak of truth or knowledge as being the correspondence of thought to things is to fall back upon a metaphor and to adopt from popular language a theory of knowledge which only states the problem it professes to solve. The distinction between *my* thought and reality is a perfectly valid and a very important distinction; but it affords no grounds for the opinion that reality in its ultimate nature can be something quite other than thought. Reality is objectivity, *i. e.*, coherence in thought for myself, and — wherever I can apply this test also — coherence of my thought with that of others.<sup>1</sup> So far as our *feelings* are concerned, we are each of us shut up in ‘closed spheres’; but it is for that very reason that mere feelings do not constitute knowledge (though there may be knowledge *of* them). I have, therefore, taken it for granted that in a discussion about *epistemology* the world of consciousness referred to was the world of thought, or of feelings only as interpreted and transmuted by thinking. It is only the *ratio* of our feelings to one another that admits of comparison with what others experience. I can never know, for instance, that what I call a red color gives you the same feeling that it gives me; but I am satisfied, if I find that I distinguish red from green and other colors in the same sort of way in which you and other persons do (not being the color-blind minority — whose judgment I do not accept, simply because their judgments of identity and difference do not fit in with those of the majority

<sup>1</sup> See article *What is Reality?* in this REVIEW, No. 3.

of human beings *nor even with those of one another*). Identity of ratios — of relationships — is all I can know, when I say that sensations or feelings are the same to me and to you. But, as we know,  $\frac{2}{3} = \frac{4}{6}$ , and yet 2 and 4, 3 and 6 are different numbers. It is because of the objectivity of the primary, as contrasted with the subjectivity of the secondary qualities of matter, that scientific men tend to regard the real world 'behind' sensible phenomena as consisting of what possesses the primary qualities only, and to endeavor constantly to translate the chaos of subjective feelings into the terms of number and measure, *i. e.*, to turn the ordinary man's real world, that he sees, touches, smells, into a world of thought-relations. After all, however, this real world of scientific thought is a world of imagined phenomena — figures, vibrations, etc., which we should see and feel *if* we had keener eyes and a keener sense of touch. In either aspect the real world of science is a world that implies the presence to it of a conscious subject to make it possible. Most scientists are fond of asserting the relativity of knowledge, without perhaps taking the notion quite seriously: the more philosophical scientists admit that their atoms, molecular movements, etc., are only working hypotheses, *i. e.*, mental constructs.

The objectivity of knowledge implies at least some degree of similarity between the mental structure of different human beings: still more obviously does the possibility of communicating knowledge imply such similarity. An epistemology, which does not wish to foredoom itself to complete scepticism, must take for granted that reality *is* — in some sense, that it can be known — to some extent, and that what is known can be communicated — to some extent. Otherwise we may as well accept the paradoxes of Gorgias as the sum total of human wisdom. But there cannot be similarity without identity. Mere similarity is a contradictory conception. Thus we are *logically* driven to the conclusion that, if knowledge is possible and if knowledge is communicable, there must be some identity underlying the differences of individual human minds. The question about the minds of lower animals or of any other

possible intelligences need cause no trouble. If, and so far as, we can communicate our thoughts and feelings to dogs and cats, angels and devils, so far is there identity underlying the differences between us and them. To argue that such identity is merely 'logical' and not 'real' is only to evade the question and implicitly to deny the possibility of knowledge, by re-asserting an impassable gap between thought and reality.<sup>1</sup>

Whether we are to say that reality *is* thought or not, is a good deal a question of language. If the term 'thought' be expressly limited to discursive thought, which is necessarily abstract, and which necessarily accentuates the distinction between subject and predicate, we cannot without qualification identify reality with thought in that sense. The predicate of the judgment is by its very nature a predicate *of* reality, and so distinguished from it. But this is only one aspect of the judgment. If the difference or distinction were the sole aspect of judgment, judgment would be impossible. Judgment is distinction; but it is distinction within a unity, difference in identity. If the predicate is not predicated of the subject as a part of it (or, in the negative judgment, denied of the subject to which it has been suggested it may possibly belong), there is no predication at all. A theory which asserts difference without identity and a theory which asserts identity without difference, both make predication impossible and land us in the old series of 'Sophistic' difficulties, the outcome of Heracleiteanism and of Eleaticism alike, when these had given birth to popular philosophy. Now, if this identity of the real and that which we think of it is not to be called an identity in 'thought,' we must simply invent some other term. 'Thought' seems to me a good term for the purpose: it is a possible equivalent of *νοῦς* or *νόησις*, as well as of *διάνοια*. Mr. Bradley prefers the term 'Experience' as a name for 'the Absolute,' because of this "dualism inherent in thought" and as an assertion of the all-inclusiveness of the Absolute. "Feeling and will," he says, "must also be transmuted in this

<sup>1</sup> On "the identity between souls," cf. Mr. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*, pp. 347-353.

whole, into which thought has entered. Such a whole state would possess in a superior form that immediacy which we find (more or less) in feeling ; and in this whole all divisions would be healed up.”<sup>1</sup> It is true the term ‘thought’ is inadequate ; but it seems to me the least objectionable of available terms, for these reasons : (1) ‘Experience’ is apt to suggest multiplicity and a time-process rather than the unity of immediate apprehension. (2) ‘Feeling’ does express ‘immediacy’ and absence of difference, but on its lowest level, whereas we wish to express a unity in which differences are included and reconciled, rather than a unity which has not yet differentiated itself, because it is too low down in the scale.<sup>2</sup> (3) ‘Will,’ unless it be taken in a quite artificial sense, implies motives, which it is absurd to imagine as acting on ‘the Absolute,’ which, if absolute, can have no wants or cravings. (4) As I have tried to show, Thought, even in the sense of ‘relational and discursive thought,’ implies a unity amid difference, and therefore may be fitly used to express an immediacy of apprehension, of which we can only have faint and slight experience, the immediacy of feeling combined with the clearness and fulness of thought. Mr. Bradley himself says, “When thought begins to be more than rational, it ceases to be mere thinking” — a sentence which seems to admit a possible distinction between ‘thought’ in the higher sense and ‘mere thinking’ in which the dualism is not transcended.

It matters little what precise term we adopt, provided it be once clearly recognized that Reality, or the Absolute, or whatever we call it, cannot be something quite alien to, and inaccessible by, our conscious experience, and that, though including differences, it cannot itself be a plurality.<sup>3</sup> Truth — if there is any meaning in the term — must ultimately be one

<sup>1</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> I take it for granted that ‘the Absolute’ must at least be expressed in terms of the *highest* elements of our experience, though these terms may need correction and qualification when transferred from their use in reference to human beings.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Bradley’s phrase about an “unearthly ballet of bloodless categories” (at the end of his *Logic*) has been a favorite weapon in the hands of ‘Realist’ assailants of Idealism. I trust that his exposure of “a plurality of reals” (in his *Appearance and Reality*, pp. 140–143) will be equally appreciated.

and indivisible, however much we may be in the habit of speaking of different kinds of 'truths,' because we have to content ourselves with very partial and one-sided statements, to which we give the name that properly belongs only to the fullness of perfect knowledge in which every part or aspect of reality is seen at once in relation to the whole, in which there can be no appearance of a gap between thought cut off from reality and reality cut off from thought.<sup>1</sup> Such perfect knowledge is to us only an ideal ; but it must be recognized as conditioning all sound logical theories, however much we provisionally adopt the metaphors (metaphors that soon get mixed) of ordinary speech about a parallelism between thought and things, about thought mirroring existence, etc.

To put these results together—a logic that takes itself seriously and deals, therefore, with the problem of epistemology, leaves us with, at least, the following principles as a starting-point for metaphysical speculation :

I. There can be no knowledge except for a conscious subject, which can hold together the different sensations, images, ideas, etc., in a unity and so make a cosmos, an orderly and intelligible system out of the primitive 'blur' of feeling. (I have said hardly anything on this point in the present article, because it is generally conceded as a truth, at least for epistemology.)

II. Subject and object are distinguished in knowledge : in knowledge we have got beyond the primitive 'blur' in which they are not yet differentiated. But the distinction cannot be an absolute one ; else our very theory of knowledge makes knowledge impossible. The distinction is a distinction within the unity of knowledge (or of 'thought' or of 'experience')

<sup>1</sup> Prof. J. Watson, in his article in this REVIEW, Vol. II, No. 5, has dealt so fully and clearly with the theological difficulties to which Epistemological Realism leads that I feel it would be superfluous to say more on the subject. As an illustration of a very common way of speaking about 'truths,' I may refer to the Sunday-evening prayer of an old Scotchman, in which he said, "May the *truths* this day spoken, so far as agreeable to Thy Mind and Will, etc."—as if there were certain 'truths' that the Almighty did not accept, and might not like to have mentioned in public.

—whatever term we choose to adopt). This is a logical conclusion simply from taking the conception of difference or distinction and the conception of knowledge quite seriously. The reluctance which people generally feel towards accepting such a conclusion seems to arise from the tendency to translate ‘subject’ and ‘object’ straight away into the (supposed) definite individual soul and the (supposed) real world of ordinary thought, which is so largely impregnated with the traditional dualistic philosophy. If we start with the assertion of an absolute difference between the soul as thinking substance and matter as the opposite kind of substance, no wonder if we find a difficulty in explaining the possibility of knowledge. But do we *logically* need to start with any such assumption? A very slight amount of careful thinking shows us that the ‘soul’ and the ‘thing’ are alike mental constructs, inferences, not primitive data of consciousness.

III. Were we to stop here and attempt at once to pass to speculative metaphysics, we might fairly enough be charged with ‘solipsism’; but, as I have pointed out, knowledge, in the sense in which we human beings claim to possess knowledge, implies the presence of other selves than our own. Reality means objectivity, *i.e.*, validity and coherence for other selves as well as for self. The existence of other selves than our own is an inference, though an inference speedily arrived at; but the identity of our own self through various experiences is likewise an inference. Since knowledge can be the same for different selves, and since we can communicate our knowledge to them and they to us, there must be an identity underlying all the differences of different selves.

IV. Consistency cannot be ultimately distinguished from truth. The ideal of knowledge is the impossibility of thinking a contradiction, or, to put it positively, the necessity of seeing every part in relation to the whole. This ideal of knowledge is presupposed in every actual step we take in acquiring knowledge; in learning we gradually fill up this form of an orderly system, a unity of the manifold, which is implicit in our thought from the first.

These four positions seem to me some, at least, of the conclusions of an epistemology, which starts only with the assumption that knowledge *is* possible. They are the basis on which we must construct our speculative metaphysics. If, then, we hold that the truest thing we can say about the universe as a whole is that it is the manifestation of the One in the Many, we are not ‘hypostatizing logical abstractions,’ but simply putting these results together and summing them up in a general formula. On the other hand, to adopt a system of monadism or pluralism is to hypostatize the abstractions, not of logic, but of popular picture-thinking—to treat the ‘things’ or ‘souls’ which are the mental constructs of ordinary thought as if they were independent, real existences. If they are not ‘independent,’ but included in the unity of one system, then the system is not ‘pluralism’ but a recognition, in a round-about way, of the ‘One in the Many’ as the Absolute.

The results of epistemology only set the problem for speculative metaphysics in a definite form. The problems, even when thus determined, are so numerous and admit of so many various answers that the metaphysician has no reason to complain that the epistemologist is interfering unduly with his province. Granted that the ultimate nature of reality must be expressed by such a formula as the One in the Many, we have still to ask *How* the One manifests itself in multiplicity and difference? To ask ‘Why?’ is in vain, if by the question we are attempting to get behind the Absolute—to find out its ‘motives,’ so to speak, as if it were a finite person. Granted that our own consciousness of our selves as subjects gives us our best clue to understanding the nature of the unity of the cosmos, we have still to endeavor to realize what is involved in a ‘self’ which is not in time, but ‘eternal.’ Mr. Bradley, indeed, seems to reject the notion of a timeless self because it is “a psychological monster.”<sup>1</sup> “A timeless self, acting in a particular way,” he says, “from its general timeless nature, is to me a psychological monster.” Now I quite agree that the notion of a timeless self is absurd in the special science of

<sup>1</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, pp. 113, 114.

psychology, which deals only with events in time ; but the "timeless self" is not a psychological, but a metaphysical concept. The notion of "a timeless self acting in a particular way" is also absurd, if it be taken to mean "acting at particular times and from particular motives," or without any motives at all, just as in theology confusion results if we put the metaphysical conception of God as eternal and unchangeable alongside of the picture-thinking of popular religious belief, so that the Unchangeable is spoken of as repenting, etc. I think it unfortunate that T. H. Green seemed to countenance this confusion of ideas by his phrase "a timeless act."<sup>1</sup> It seems impossible to keep the notion of time out of the idea of an act: it is difficult enough to keep it out of the idea of a self, even though the logical argument for the existence of a timeless self is the possibility of being aware of succession in time. It must be clearly realized that in transferring any term such as 'self,' or 'thought,' to the ultimate unity of the cosmos, we must get rid of the notions of particularity, of difference, of change, which belong to such terms in their psychological use. On the other hand, it must be equally borne in mind that this ultimate reality is a reality which appears, which manifests itself in many selves, in the multiplicity of particular things, in the change and process of the world of time: and perhaps the most urgent of problems in any philosophical system is to attempt to show how the One, the Eternal, the Real, manifests itself in the manifold appearances of time — the problem, that is to say, of the Philosophy of Nature and the Philosophy of History. The mysticism which simply turns away from the manifold empties the One of any meaning it can have for us. On the other hand the attempt to construct an 'evolutional' philosophy by assuming the absolute reality of time and change and multiplicity is equally suicidal. These concepts are meaningless except for, and relatively to, an eternal One. As in the logical question of the judgment, so here either Eleaticism or Heracliteanism taken by itself leads only to nescience or scepticism. The mystical solution is not popular at present; but to many

<sup>1</sup> *Prolegomena to Ethics*, § 102.

people the word 'evolution' is the key to all mysteries, though evolution may mean to them nothing more than a vague belief that the Universe is 'toddling along somehow'; and, when they come to say more about it, they deny the existence of any *Universe* and let everything run along in an absolute flux. Evolution belongs only to the world of appearance; but that does not mean that it is an 'illusion.' Illusions are detected by a want of coherence in our practical experience: the world of appearance is the reality in which the plain man believes. And the idealist believes in it, too, for to him, though it is not in itself the absolute reality, it is the only manifestation of that absolute reality which the human mind can possibly know. And it is a strange objection to make,<sup>1</sup> that a philosophy is treating the world in space and time as an 'illusion,' because that philosophy regards this world — not, indeed, as the absolutely real, but as something more worth study than if it were — as the revelation of Supreme Reason, of what old theologies have described as that Co-eternal Reason of God, who creates nature and becomes incarnate in man.

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. F. C. S. Schiller, in this REVIEW, Vol. II, p. 589, alleges that "upon Hegelian principles, if the Deity exists eternally, the time-process must be illusory altogether."